



MINISTER'S COLUMN

DECEMBER 2024

The Practice of Presence

Dear CUF folks,

It's likely that our December theme, "The Practice of Presence" was chosen for Advent season and the annual frenzy of holiday events, shopping, and travel leading up to Christmas. It is also a very appropriate as a post-election, pre-inauguration reminder of the value of bringing attention to the present moment, both as a form of spiritual practice and for healthy preparation and action. It's human nature to look ahead to prepare ourselves for what might come, but to get stuck spinning out all of the possibilities doesn't actually help us get ready. And dwelling in the past – whether in pleasant memories or missed portents of doom – is not the same as learning from it. How might it feel to move our attention from dreading the coming administration, and even from anticipating light and hope, to be present in the moment?

What are your practices of presence? Every part of your daily routine is an opportunity to practice presence by simply focusing attention on what you are doing. In his "Rituals for Gratitude at the Year's Closing," Dr. Elias Ortega lists several possibilities: "Welcoming the Morning Light Greeting," "Mindful Tea or Coffee Ceremony," "Mindful Eating Blessing," "Candle Meditation," "Relax Contemplating the Evening Sky," etc. It is simple, but if it were easy, we'd all be blissfully stress-free, right? I think it's good to start small - and try for consistency.

Nothing in the past is as powerful as what we choose to do in the present moment. ~Louise Hay

The spiritual practices of mindfulness we do individually can be integrated into our relationships: listening deeply to another in conversation, sending a note or text of thanks, taking a walk to notice connections with the natural world. Throughout this busy holiday season, let us bring our awareness to the present moment. In this month and in all the months to come, let us practice presence in our collective work within the Fellowship and with community partners for human and civil rights, environmental and climate justice.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sarah'.